

**CLAIMS**

1. A network management tool for representing a network configuration including a plurality of distinct network segments coupled to a centralized node, the tool comprising:

5       a) a user interface for displaying the representation of said network configuration;

      b) a list containing a plurality of attributes of the network segments; and

      c) a display controller for affecting a display content of said representation on said user interface, said display controller providing a reference frame for maintaining the location of selected ones of the network segments in context of said display content;

10       wherein said display controller coordinating the display of said display content in a predetermined sequence on said user interface.

15       2. The network management tool of claim 1 further comprising the reference frame of said display controller having a plurality of display indicators for indicating a predetermined number of selected network components of said representation.

20       3. The network management tool of claim 2, wherein the display indicators provide a global context of the selected network components on said user interface.

25       4. The network management tool of claim 3, wherein said predetermined number is the total number of said selected network components contained in said network configuration.

      5. The network management tool of claim 3, wherein said selected network components are coupled to distinct said centralized node and are selected from the group comprising line, ring, star, bus, and chain.

      6. The network management tool of claims 2 or 3 further comprising a reference feature of said display controller capable of identifying a selected network component of said representation.

      7. The network management tool of claim 6, wherein said reference feature is a unique identifier of said selected network component.

      8. The network management tool of claim 7, wherein said unique identifier is also contained in said list content of said list.

9. The network management tool of claim 8, wherein said unique identifier contained in said list is operatively coupled to said unique identifier contained in said display controller.

10. The network management tool of claims 8 or 9, wherein said selected network component is one of the distinct network segments.

11. The network management tool of claims 6 or 7 further comprising a plurality of interrelation indicators associated with said plurality of display indicators, the interrelation indicators for providing an indication of interrelated network components.

12. The network management tool of claim 11, wherein said interrelation indicators are coupled to said reference feature.

13. The network management tool of claim 12, wherein said selected network component is one of the distinct network segments.

14. The network management tool of claims 2 or 3, wherein the display indicators coordinate a number of the selected network components contained in said display content.

15. The network management tool of claims 2 or 6, wherein said display content is presented as a virtual spiral of the distinct network rings displayed in said predetermined sequence.

16. The network management tool of claim 15 further comprising the display of said virtual spiral radiating from a central region of the spiral.

17. The network management tool of claim 16, wherein said central region is said centralized node.

18. The network management tool of claims 1 or 2 further comprising a sorter for ordering said list content of the selectable attributes in a predetermined order.

19. The network management tool of claim 1 further comprising a formatter for ordering said display content according to a predetermined format.

20. The network management tool of claim 19, wherein the predetermined format is selected from the group comprising stacked, overlaid, and isolated.

21. The network management tool of claims 19 or 20 further comprising a plurality of display indicators for modifying said display content presented by the predetermined format.

22. The network management tool of claim 21, wherein said display indicators are operatively coupled to some of the selected attributes in said list.

23. The network management tool of claims 1 or 2 further comprising a supplemental list for communicating additional information to that contained in said list, said supplemental list is associated with a selected network component contained in said display content.

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24. A computer program product for representing a network configuration including a plurality of distinct network segments coupled to a centralized node, the product comprising:

- a) a computer-readable medium;
- 10 b) a display module stored on the computer-readable medium for displaying the representation of said network configuration;
- c) a list module coupled to said display module for displaying a plurality of attributes of the network segments; and
- d) a display controller module coupled to said display module for affecting an output display content of said representation generated by said display module, said display controller module providing a reference frame for maintaining the location in context of selected ones of the network segments of the display content; wherein said display controller module coordinating the display of said display content in a predetermined sequence.

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25. A method for representing a network configuration including a plurality of distinct network segments coupled to a centralized node, the method comprising:

- a) displaying the representation of said network configuration;
- b) providing a list containing a plurality of attributes of the network segments;
- c) controlling a display content of said representation through a reference frame for maintaining the location in context of selected ones of the network segments of said display content; and
- 25 d) coordinating the display of in said display content by the reference frame in a predetermined sequence.